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For immediate release: July 23, 2007 

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New state registry designed to protect fathers' rights

Hotline number is 1-877-IF-DADDY

Richmond – *Could you be a father?* A new program through the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) can help protect the rights of men who may have fathered a child.

Enacted July 1, 2007, the Virginia Putative Father Registry (VPFR) is a confidential database created to protect the rights of biological fathers. A man is considered a putative (possible) father if he meets any of these conditions:

- he is not married to the child's mother
- a court has not determined paternity
- he has not signed a written agreement acknowledging paternity
- he has not adopted the child.

"Any man who has been sexually active could potentially be a father," explained VDSS Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr. "The purpose of the registry is to protect the rights of a man who wants to be notified if a child he may have fathered is placed for adoption, or if parental rights are about to be terminated," he said.

Following a national trend, Virginia joins more than two dozen other states in establishing a registry. The VPFR went into law under [Section 63-2-1249](#) of the Code of Virginia. Legal experts say the registry is helpful in the adoption process, protecting the interests of biological and adoptive parents.

The VPFR is confidential and can only be accessed by legitimate parties in certain legal situations. Registration information is available at www.vaputativefather.com; 1-877-IF-DADDY; putativefather@dss.virginia.gov; or, at any local department of social services. Registering is free and voluntary.

It is important that putative fathers register:

- before the birth of a child, even if he is not aware of a pregnancy
- within 10 days of the birth of a child

- within 10 days from the mailing of notice to register
- within 10 days of discovery of fraud by the birth mother
- after relations with new partners or continued relations with the same woman.

Registering does not establish paternity, which is a separate legal process. However, it can be the first step toward establishing paternity. Putative fathers who fail to register waive these rights:

- to be notified regarding termination of parental rights procedures, or
- to be notified of adoption proceedings, or
- to consent to an adoption.

“Having a child means thinking about the future. The Virginia Putative Father Registry protects a putative father’s rights if adoption is being considered. The few minutes it takes to register could ensure a father’s right to be part of his child’s life. It can also help quicken the process of adoption and ensure that everyone’s rights are protected,” Commissioner Conyers said.

The VDSS Home Office is located in Richmond and administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state. The VDSS mission is “People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities.”

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Interviews are available upon request. For additional story ideas and information, contact Carla Harris, VDSS, (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov. For more details on Virginia State Code as it relates to the Putative Father Registry, visit <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/1st/LS831684.HTM>.